



# GRANT'S ZEBRA

**Perissodactyla**  
**Family:** Equidae  
**Genus:** *Equus*  
**Species:** *burchelli*  
*boehmi*



**Range:** Ethiopia to central Angola into southern Africa

**Habitat:** open savannas and grasslands

**Niche:** diurnal, terrestrial, herbivore-nomadic grazer

**Wild diet:** various coarse vegetation & tall grasses available to grazers

**Zoo diet:** hay, oats, diced vegetables, horse chow and salt

**Life Span:** (Wild) 20-25 years, (Captivity) 29 years

**Sexual dimorphism:** **Male** has more pronounced mane and is slightly heavier

**Location in SF Zoo:** African Savanna

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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They present the typical horse shape, distinguished by varying patterns of black or dark brown stripes interspersed with whitish and they have black skin under their pelt. No two zebras have the same pattern. Their coloring helps camouflage them against predation. Thick mane stands upright and tail is tufted. Legs are short and stocky while ears are large and can turn in all directions. Hearing, smell and vision are all keen. Eyes set far back on skull gives them a wide field of vision. Stripes break up shape of individuals in a herd thus making it more difficult for a predator to single any particular animal.

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|----------------|-----------|
| <b>Weight:</b> | 770 lbs   |
| <b>Length:</b> | 6-8 ft    |
| <b>SH:</b>     | 4 ft      |
| <b>TL:</b>     | 18-22 in. |

The dental formula is  $I3/3 - C1/1 - PM3/4 - M3/3 \times 2 + 42$ . Incisors developed to facilitate biting off quantities of vegetation. Massive jaws and powerful cheek teeth and muscles evolved for thorough mastication of coarse, fibrous plant material.

Zebras are able to reach up to 64 km/h (40 mph) but can walk, canter, trot or gallop equally well. They are able to kick with hind feet when in a defensive posture.

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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Plains Zebra are considered common and widespread across Africa, but there has been a population decline in 10 out of the 17 range states since the 1992 and 2002 IUCN Red List assessments. While equid meat is often not a preferred choice, Plains Zebra are threatened by hunting through much of their range, especially when they move out of protected areas. Hunting for their skins occurs, particularly in East Africa as these subspecies do not have the shadow stripe present in southern African subspecies. Fencing areas can block migration corridors although Plains Zebras have been shown to re-establish migration routes if barriers are removed.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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Barking alarm is a hoarse “kua-kua”, ending in a whinney.

Cohesive family groups exist within larger herd, which is composed of one stallion, several mares, and young. Mares normally stay in same family groups for their lifetime. Often a group of 10 or 12 share a home range with gnus and ostriches. Zebras prefer tall coarse grasses which when removed, expose the shorter more succulent blades preferred by gnus and gazelle. Young surplus males may form bachelor herds that upon reaching their 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> year attempt to ‘kidnap’ females to begin their own family. Lions are the most successful predators, preying chiefly on the young, ill or aging.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Stallions fight for control of several mares though no permanent bond exists between any two adult animals. Though a stallion will breed with any available female, a low ranking female may be chased from the herd by other mares. One foal may be born at any time of year. It has been recorded that they can stand 11 minutes after birth, walk between 19 - 32 minutes, canters after 44 minutes and begins nursing in 67 minutes. Young males leave the family group between the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year while the female remain.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Estrous Polyestrous | Sexual Maturity: M 1-3 yrs / F 2-3 yrs |
| Gestation: 356 days | Weaning Age: 4-5 months                |
| # of Mammae: 1 pr   | Weight at birth: 66-77 lbs             |
| # of Young: 1       |  |

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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They are part of the annual migration where they lead, cropping the high grasses, followed by Wildebeests (gnus) while Thomson’s gazelles bringing up the rear.

Zebras do well in captivity, remaining healthy and reproducing. Over the years they have been crossbred with horses and donkeys but both pure and cross stock resist domestication for the use as draft animals, etc.

There are three different species of zebra: Plains, Mountain and Grevy’s, with multiple subspecies. The equines in our Savanna are Grant’s zebras, which are the smallest of the Plains zebra species.

### **Sources:**

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<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/41013/0>